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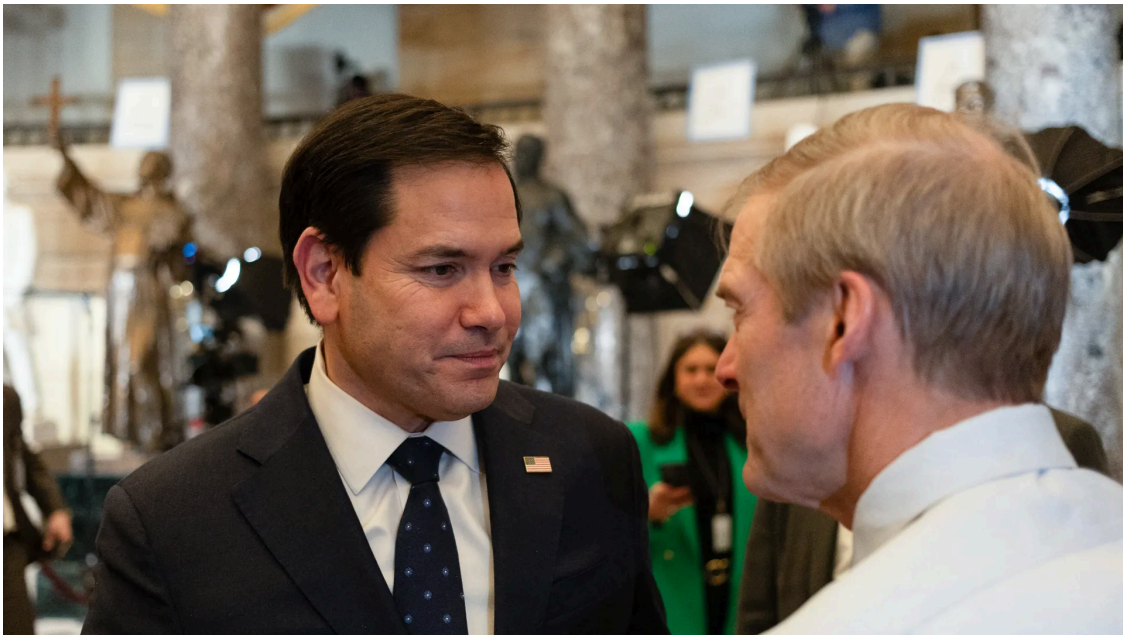


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Scoop: State Dept. to use AI to revoke visas of foreign students who appear "pro-Hamas"



Marc Caputo



Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks with Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) in Statuary Hall before President Trump's address to Congress on Tuesday. Photo: Alex Wroblewski/AFP via Getty Images

State Dept. to use AI to revoke visas of foreign students who appear "pro-Hamas"

Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#) is launching an AI-fueled "Catch and Revoke" effort to cancel the visas of foreign nationals who appear to support Hamas or other designated terror groups, senior State Department officials tell Axios.

Why it matters: The effort — which includes AI-assisted reviews of tens of thousands of student visa holders' social media accounts — marks a dramatic escalation in the U.S. government's policing of foreign nationals' conduct and speech.

- The reviews of social media accounts are particularly looking for evidence of alleged terrorist sympathies expressed after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, officials say.

Officials plan to examine internal databases to see whether any visa holders were arrested but allowed to stay in the country during the Biden administration.

- They say they're also checking news reports of anti-Israel demonstrations and Jewish students' lawsuits that highlight foreign nationals allegedly engaged in antisemitic activity without consequence.
- The State Department is working with the departments of Justice and Homeland Security in what one senior State official called a "whole of government and whole of authority approach."

Zoom in: To launch "Catch and Revoke," federal officials examined 100,000 people in the Student Exchange Visitor System since October 2023 to see if any visas had been revoked because the student been arrested or suspended from school.

- Usually, a consular official whose office issues the visa for a foreigner makes the revocation decision once they've been alerted about an arrest or a suspension.

- "We found literally zero visa revocations during the Biden administration," the official said, "... which suggests a blind eye attitude toward law enforcement."

Zoom out: The Immigration Nationality Act of 1952 gives the secretary of state the authority to revoke visas from foreigners deemed to be a threat —a point Rubio [made](#) as a senator eight days after Oct. 7.

- "We see people marching at our universities and in the streets of our country ... calling for Intifada, celebrating what Hamas has done ... Those people need to go," Rubio said.
- Trump echoed the same sentiments in a Jan. 30 White House [fact sheet](#) tied to an [executive order](#) aimed at antisemitism at "pro-Hamas" activity: "To all the resident aliens who joined in the pro-jihadist protests, we put you on notice. We will find you, and we will deport you."
- Another [executive order](#), issued Jan. 20, targets visa holders and foreigners who "threaten our national security, espouse hateful ideology."

The big picture: The cumulative effect of Trump's executive orders is already having a chilling effect on student visa-holders. They're starting to [shy away](#) from protests critical of Israel.

- "This should concern all Americans. This is a First Amendment and freedom of speech issue and the administration will overplay its hand," said Abed Ayoub, head of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.
- "Americans won't like this. They'll view this as capitulating free speech rights for a foreign nation."

The backstory: Ayoub said "the blueprint" for the new program can be found in [Operation Boulder of 1972](#), when the Nixon administration infiltrated and [surveilled](#) pro-Palestinian groups, which he said infringed on the rights of U.S. citizens as well as foreign nationals.

- "With the advent of AI, it's even scarier because they're policing speech and using faulty technology," Ayoub said.

The senior State Department official, however, said that "it would be negligent for the department that takes national security seriously to ignore publicly available information about [visa] applicants in terms of AI tools. ... AI is one of the resources available to the government that's very different from where we were technologically decades ago."

- If officials find a social media post from a foreign national that appears to endorse the attack on Israel and looks "pro-Hamas," the official said, that could be grounds for visa revocation.
- "Under President Trump, the Immigration Nationality Act is great again," the official added.

Between the lines: The Trump administration's pro-Israel posture reflects his and Rubio's longstanding commitment toward the Jewish state, an issue of intense interest to [white evangelicals](#).

- Opposition to Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza, meanwhile, has [divided](#) the Democratic base, polls show.

Voters tend to [disfavor](#) rallies critical of Israel, and in some surveys a [plurality](#) of voters doesn't distinguish between support for Hamas and support for the Palestinian people — despite the efforts of some organizers.

- "We're not doing this for the polling, but it never hurts to be on the right side of an issue," a White House adviser said.



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Marc Caputo

Mar 27, 2025 - Politics & Policy

Exclusive: Trump's "pro-Hamas" purge could block foreign students from colleges



Illustration: Brendan Lynch/Axios

The [Trump administration](#) is discussing plans to try to block certain colleges from having any foreign students if it decides too many are "pro-Hamas," senior Justice and State Department officials tell Axios.

Why it matters: The effort — which could include grand jury subpoenas — marks another escalation of Trump's aggressive crackdown on immigration and antisemitism that civil libertarians say stifles campus speech and has led to several lawsuits.

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Avery Lotz
Mar 27, 2025 - Politics & Policy

Rubio says U.S. may have pulled more than 300 visas



Secretary of State Marco Rubio listens to a question during a press conference with Guyanese President Irfaan Ali (not pictured) in Georgetown, Guyana, on March 27. Photo: Nathan Howard/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#) said Thursday that the [State Department](#) may have already revoked more than 300 visas as the [Trump administration](#) pushes a sweeping immigration crackdown.

The big picture: Federal immigration enforcement has turned to college campuses, where it is targeting those who have expressed [pro-Palestinian views](#) in a strategy First Amendment and immigration advocates say is [stifling free speech](#).

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Russell Contreras, Steph Solis
23 hours ago - Politics & Policy

Ambush arrest of Tufts student sparks new concerns about immigration crackdown



Signage and flowers are placed on a tree next to where ICE agents apprehended Tuft University graduate student Rumeyza Ozturk on March 27, 2025 in Somerville, Massachusetts. Photo: Scott Eisen/Getty Images

The arrest of a [Tufts University](#) student by hooded Homeland Security agents in plain clothes — caught on video on a suburban Boston street — is raising fresh questions about the Trump administration's [aggressive crackdown](#) on immigrants over the opinions they've expressed.

Why it matters: The administration's push to quickly scoop up, detain and deport college students with pro-Palestinian views has stunned civil libertarians, who say it violates American traditions of [free speech](#) and due process under the law.

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